



Branford, Connecticut

Economic Development Commission

Annual Report

JULY 1, 2007 – JUNE 30, 2008

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) met throughout the past year on the third Wednesday of each month (except August) and enjoyed continued high attendance and participation. Our dedicated commission members include: *Neal Crowley, Bob Dow, Ray Figlewski (chairman), Julie Francis, Joe Gordon, Rhoda Loeb, Bill O'Brien, Robin Sandler and Doss Venema*. Chamber of Commerce President *Ed Lazarus* also attended regularly, bringing a fresh perspective and new ideas to the Commission's work.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the passing of long-time **EDC member Bob Dow**. Bob was a lifelong Branford resident and served on the Commission for more than a decade, rarely missing a meeting and always offering his insight, real estate expertise, and seemingly boundless energy to the Commission's work. The Branford community was indeed fortunate to have such an active member as Bob. We will continue to benefit from the numerous contributions he made to his hometown in so many ways.

The Commission is also grateful to **Neal Crowley** for keeping the Commission up to date with the **Planning and Zoning Commission** activities throughout the year.

This year's "**State of the Town Breakfast**" format deviated from that of past years. The EDC and Chamber of Commerce agreed that rather than invite an out-of-town key note speaker, the business community wanted to hear about various town plans and projects and invited **First Selectman "Unk" DaRos** to provide such an overview. The First Selectman covered a broad range of issues that included legal action concerning both the Tabor property and the proposed Founders Village development, the effect of the sudden increase in energy costs on the town budget, the new sewer "use fee", the approaching property revaluation, various transportation projects ranging from the Amtrak bridge to Route 1 improvements, plans to better utilize town owned facilities, efforts by the Town to be more "green", P&Z's undertaking in preparing a new Plan of Conservation and Development and the broader ranged Vision Project.

The Commission devoted much of its energies this past year into developing its own **economic development strategic action plan**. With the services of Mark Waterhouse of Garnet Consulting, the EDC put together an action agenda to better position Branford to take advantage of development opportunities. In conjunction with P&Z's efforts to update to the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and with the broader reaching Vision Project, the EDC conducted a series of meetings and interviews with stakeholders including property owners, commercial realtors and business owners, as well as members of the commission and the Chamber of Commerce.

A comprehensive action agenda was developed and will serve as the basis for EDC activity for the foreseeable future. The core of this plan has also been incorporated into the draft POCD. Tasks include developing an incentive program for business recruitment and expansion, creating a mechanism to communicate regularly with the town's business community, expanding efforts to promote the town center businesses, and conducting a town-wide development summit. The Commission is confident that the execution of these and other projects identified in the plan will result in the town being strongly positioned for new business development and expansions.

At the same time, the Commission continued its work with various regional partners, particularly the **Regional Workforce Alliance**, the **Regional Growth Partnership [RGP]** and the **Greater New Haven Convention and Visitor Bureau**.

Action undertaken by the Commission throughout FY 2006-2007 includes:

- Through the **Workforce Alliance**, assisted local businesses in securing "Incumbent Worker" training grants as a means to increase a company's productivity and competitiveness.
- Worked with the **Greater New Haven Convention and Visitor Bureau** to give Branford increased exposure within the tourism industry, including being host to groups of European travel agents for a glimpse of New England.
- Developing and placing **articles in the *New England Real Estate Journal*** that promote Branford's assets and highlight its quality of life for new and relocating businesses.
- Received and reviewed **5 demolition application notices** for structures of 75 years or more, as required by town ordinance. And,
- The **Town Center Merchants Committee's** continued in its role as a resource and leader for the businesses around the green and in the town center. EDC member and *Sound Runner* owner **Julie Francis** was been joined by **Peter Indeck of Arabella's** boutique as the committee's co-chair.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Figlweski, Chairman